

The sevenfold cause and effect instruction originated with Shakyamuni Buddha and has come down to us from the great masters Maitreya, Asanga, Chandrakirti, Chandragomin, Kamalashila, and so forth. *Equalizing and exchanging self for others* also originated with Shakyamuni Buddha and has come down to us from the great masters Manjushri, Nagarjuna, Shantideva, and so forth. The Indonesian master Serlingpa held both traditions and passed them down to Atisha who disseminated them in a combined form in Tibet.

The sevenfold cause and effect instruction:

The six causes are:

1. Understanding that all sentient beings have been one's mother
2. Thinking of their kindness
3. Wanting to repay their kindness
4. Affectionate love
5. Great compassion
6. The superior intent

In dependence on these causes the effect is:

7. Bodhicitta

Each step in the sequence is also a result of the previous one. Further, as mentioned previously (Handout 12), before practitioners engage in the meditation on those seven steps they must train in equanimity. However, as equanimity is the essential prerequisite for the practice of any of the three vehicles it is often not explicitly cited as one of the causes of Bodhicitta.

Equanimity

Tibetan: འདྲ་སྟོ་མཁའ། - *Dang nyom* (*Dang nyom* = equanimity)

There are three types of equanimity:

- a) Equanimity of feeling: all awarenesses are concomitant with any of the three types of feelings (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings). Equanimity of feeling refers to neutral feelings.
- b) Equanimity of application: during the practice of calm abiding practitioners may experience one of the two obstacles to calm abiding which are *excitement* and *mental sinking*. At that time the practitioners must apply the appropriate antidotes in order to strengthen their concentration. However, at the time when none of those obstacles are present the practitioners may nevertheless be tempted to apply any of the antidotes and are thus required to deploy the equanimity of application, i.e. to have equanimity towards the application of any of the antidotes which means to leave the mind alone when it is functioning properly.
- c) Immeasurable equanimity: impartiality towards all sentient beings the training of which must precede the training in the sevenfold cause and effect instruction.

However, there is a difference between the immeasurable equanimity which is described here and the immeasurable equanimity of the *Four Immeasurables* recited and meditated on before a meditation session or a teaching. The immeasurable equanimity of the *Four Immeasurables* is to pray for others to have equanimity which is not enough to serve as a basis for great compassion and Bodhicitta.

Immeasurable equanimity which serves as a basis for great compassion and Bodhicitta is a state of mind which feels that it is pointless to generate prejudices towards sentient beings, i.e. to discriminate between friend and enemy or agreeable and disagreeable, and to act under the sway of attachment and anger.

Therefore, the practitioner who has developed immeasurable equanimity reduces the coarser forms of those undesirable responses, and free from acting under their influence, gains some equilibrium of mind.

In order to cultivate such equanimity one should contemplate the following points which are based on two reasons given by Kamalashila in his '*Middling Stages of Meditation*' for why having equilibrium towards all sentient beings makes sense:

1. Sentient beings are equal from their side: all sentient beings are equal in that they want to be happy and do not want to experience suffering.
2. There is no reason to discriminate from our side:
 - a) Regarding our relationship with other sentient beings, we are attached to some, have aversion towards others and feel indifferent towards the rest. As soon as we meet someone we immediately judge them as agreeable, disagreeable or neither.
 - b) There are numerous disadvantages of such attachment, etc.
 - c) Our preference or dislike for some sentient beings is often based on very superficial reasons and many of those reasons are not in accordance with reality.
 - d) Regarding those sentient beings that really benefitted or harmed us in this lifetime, our relationships with those beings are not as solid and non-changeable as they seem and just within this lifetime there are many changes. The ever-changing relationships we have with sentient beings are even more apparent when considering past and future lives.

1. Understanding that all sentient beings have been one's mother

Tibetan: མར་ཤེལ་པ། - *Mar She pa* (*Mar* = to be [one's] mother, *She pa* = understand, know)

Meditating on all sentient beings having been our mother is based on the fact that we have been taking birth in cyclic existence since beginningless time and each and every sentient having been our mother limitless times.

Therefore, through continuous and prolonged familiarity one comes to a point where one has an automatic mental response and ascertainment that whoever one encounters has acted as one's mother during countless lifetimes.

2. Being mindful of their kindness

Tibetan: སྒྲིན་ཏྭ་པ། - *Trin Tren pa* (*Trin* = kindness, *Tren pa* = be mindful, remember)

Having developed a deep understanding that all sentient beings have been one's mother countless times, one comes to realize that not only has each and every sentient being displayed the same or even more devotion and kindness towards us as our mother in this present life has done, but each of them has done so *infinite* times.

3. Wanting to repay their kindness

Tibetan: སྒྲིན་བཟོ་བ། - *Trin Zo wa* (*Trin* = kindness, *Zo wa* = make, create, pacify)

After having developed a strong sense of our mothers' kindness, one develops the strong wish to repay all sentient beings for everything they have done for us.

4. Affectionate love

Tibetan: ཡི་འོང་གི་བྱམས་པ། - *Yi ong gi Jam pa* (*Yi ong* = pleasing to the mind, charming, delightful,

gi = genitive, *Jam pa* = love)

In general the definition of love is: a caring attitude that wants a sentient being/sentient beings to be happy. However, affectionate love is not love because it is not a mental factor that wants a sentient being/sentient beings to be happy. Rather, it is a caring affection that finds all sentient beings endearing and feels close to them.

5. Great compassion

Tibetan: སྙིང་ཇེ་ཆེན་པོ། - *Nying je Chen po* (*Nying* = heart, *je* = master/ chief, *Chen po* = great)

The definition of great compassion is: a caring attitude that wants all sentient beings to be free from suffering.

6. The superior intent

Tibetan: ལྷག་བསམ། - *Lhag Sam* (*Lhag* = superior, special, surpassing, *Sam* = intent, thought)

Having cultivated great compassion and thus the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering, one now generates the wish to free all sentient beings from suffering *oneself*.

7. Bodhicitta

Tibetan: 1. སེམས་བསྐྱེད། - *Sem kye* - mind generation (*sem* = mind, *kye* = generation)

2. རྩ་ཚུབ་སེམས། - *Jang chub Sem* - mind of enlightenment (*jang chub* = enlightenment,

Sem = mind)

Having developed the superior intent of wanting to free all sentient beings oneself, one then comes to the understanding that one will only be able to free all sentient beings from suffering if one becomes enlightened. Therefore, one cultivates the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Equalizing and exchanging self for others

The method of *equalizing and exchanging self for others* also consists of a number of sequential steps which lead to the generation of Bodhicitta:

1. Equalizing and exchanging self for others
2. Affectionate love
3. Great compassion
4. The superior intent

In dependence on these causes the effect is:

5. Bodhicitta

Further, equalizing and exchanging self for others also consists of various meditational steps:

- a) Identifying the self-cherishing/self-centered attitude
- b) The shortcomings of the self-cherishing attitude
- c) The qualities of cherishing others
- d) Self and others are equal
- e) Exchanging self for others

a) Identifying the self-cherishing/self-centered attitude

The self-cherishing attitude is a type of desirous attachment which clings to "I" and "mine". This desirous attachment is *induced* by the ignorance or misperception that perceives "I" and "mine" to truly exist. Therefore, first there is an ignorance perceiving "I" and "mine" to exist truly and induced by that misperception arises a desirous attachment grasping onto "I" and "mine", i.e. the self-cherishing attitude. The function which the self-cherishing attitude performs is that it causes the avoidance of short-term problems and an unwillingness to strive towards long-term happiness. Due to the attachment to the self and thereby exaggerating its importance one is unable to bear even the slightest harm. Even minimal difficulties are considered extremely disconcerting while there is a constant sense of impending personal loss.

b) The shortcomings of the self-cherishing attitude

The shortcomings of the self-cherishing attitude are summarized in the following quotes:

Shantideva's 'Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life':

*Whatever suffering there is in the world
Arises from desire for one's own personal happiness*

and the first Panchen Lama Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen's 'Guru Puja':

The self-cherishing attitude is the entrance to all misery

c) The qualities of cherishing others

The qualities of cherishing others are summarized in the following quotes:

Shantideva's 'Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life':

*Whatever happiness there is in the world
Derives from desiring happiness for others*

and the first Panchen Lama Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen's 'Guru Puja':

Cherishing mother beings is the basis of all [positive] qualities

d) Self and others are equal

There are a few facts the contemplation of which helps the practitioner to get a deep sense of self and others being equal. Those facts stress the importance of sentient beings since ordinarily we feel that we and our happiness are more important than those of others.

- a) Sentient beings are extremely important for our mere survival. Our food, clothing, shelter and everything that is required to sustain us is provided by other sentient beings. It is in dependence on them we derive resources and enjoyments. Even something as little as a bowl of rice depends on the culmination of effort of hundreds of sentient beings.
- b) Further, everything we know, all our skills and abilities depend on others since we acquired those by either directly or indirectly relying on other sentient beings.

c) From the point of view of the Dharma, all positive qualities depend on other sentient beings. We can only generate love and compassion when there are other beings that are the focus of those positive mental states. The same is true for qualities such as generosity, morality, patience, and so forth.

Nagarjuna says in his 'Bodhicitta Commentary':

*In dependence on sentient beings
One can attain the Buddha's unsurpassable state*

Shantideva says in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life':

*Sentient beings and Buddhas are similar
From them you achieve a Buddha's qualities
How is it that you do not respect sentient beings
Just as you respect Buddhas?*

d) Moreover, self and others are equal because everyone wants to be happy and free from suffering. The first Panchen Lama Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen says in his 'Guru Puja':

*No one wants the slightest amount of suffering.
No one is satisfied by even the best happiness.
There is no difference between myself and others
So may I be blessed to rejoice in others' happiness.*

e) From the point of view of ultimate reality "I" and "others" are merely imputed and thus relative just as "here" and "there", and "this" and "that" are.

Shantideva says in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life':

*By becoming accustomed to the equality of self and others
Bodhicitta will become firm.
Self and others are dependently established;
They are false, like this shore and the other shore.

That shore is not in itself the other shore;
In relation to someone else it is this shore.
The self is not established in and of itself;
In relation to someone else it is other.*

Further, Shantideva says in his 'Compendium of Training':

*Acquaintance with the equality of self and other
Will make the mind of enlightenment stable.
Self and other are dependent [upon one another]
And thus are false like "here" and "there".
One side is not "there" in itself;
In reference to another perspective
It will be "here".
And as self is not that in its own right,
With reference to something else it is "other".*

e) Exchanging self for others

Having realized the faults of cherishing oneself, the benefits of cherishing others, and the fact that self and others are equal one is now able to replace the mind that cherishes the self with the mind that cherishes others. The latter is a mental state which unlike the mind that cherishes oneself is in accordance with reality and responsible for one's own and others' welfare.

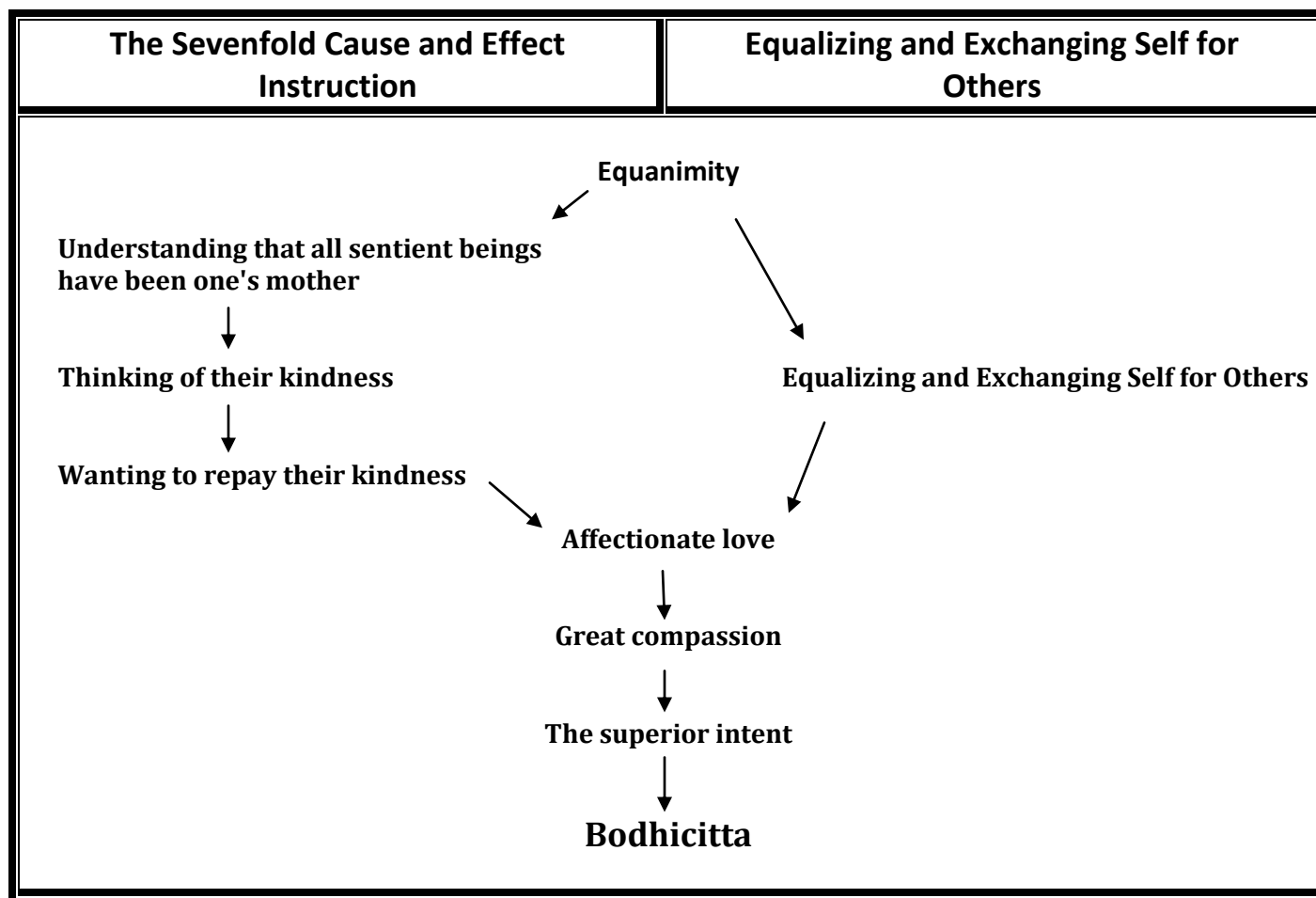
However, this does not mean that we totally neglect ourselves. It rather means that our primary focus becomes others' happiness and well-being. If we neglect ourselves we cannot effectively work for the welfare of others and thus it is crucial that we assure our personal physical and mental well-being.

Reversing one's focus from "I" and "mine" to "others" is initially, due to the strong imprints of the self-cherishing attitude, very difficult and requires continuous effort and mindfulness. However, as Shantideva says in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life':

There is nothing which

familiarity does not make easier

Therefore, with prolonged and continuous meditation one will eventually be able to 'to exchange self for others'. Once one is able to do so one moves on to develop the remaining causes of Bodhicitta which were explained during the description of the *sevenfold cause and effect instruction* -- affectionate love, great compassion, and the superior intent -- before cultivating Bodhicitta.



Lama Tsongkhapa in his *Lam Rim Chenmo* (The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment) describes a qualm by someone who

Shantideva says in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life':

Thus just as one can hold

The drops of sperm and blood

Other others to be oneself

So should one acquaint oneself with others.